

SUPREME COURT OF WISCONSIN
OFFICE OF LAWYER REGULATION

Public Reprimand With Consent

03-OLR-18

GLENN J. BLISE
Attorney at Law

Attorney Glenn J. Blise (Blise), 48, Kenosha, was the subject of four grievance investigations, which resulted in findings of professional misconduct. On the basis of the misconduct in these four matters, summarized below, as well as consideration of mitigating factors, OLR sought and Blise consented to a public reprimand.

GRIEVANCE ONE

In the first matter, a man, T.S., retained Blise in March of 1998 to represent him on various criminal charges. In July of 1998, T.S. pled guilty to some of the charges and was sentenced to six years in prison. Blise also agreed to represent T.S. in pursuing additional worker's compensation benefits for an injury T.S. sustained in 1994. T.S. had previously entered a Limited Compromise Agreement in the matter, which involved two insurers. The Agreement released one of the insurers from all liability, but held open claims of permanent disability against the other insurer.

In October of 1998, Blise obtained the client's file from previous counsel and filed a Petition to modify the compromise agreement. A hearing was eventually scheduled for June of 2000. However, in advance of the hearing, after speaking with the Department of Workforce Development and opposing counsel, Blise agreed to file an application for hearing rather than pursuing reopening of the compromise, as the limited compromise allowed T.S. to seek

additional permanency benefits. Given T.S.'s incarceration, Blise agreed to wait until T.S.'s release before seeking additional benefits.

Upon his release from prison in April of 2001, T. S. tried numerous times to contact Blise regarding his case. Blise admitted that, once his client was released from prison, he did not respond to the client's requests for information, although he had kept him informed during his incarceration. Blise also admitted that, upon T.S.'s release from prison, he did not pursue the Worker's Compensation claim on his behalf. Despite Blise's inaction the claim remained viable.

In July of 2001, OLR requested that Blise provide a written response to T.S.'s grievance. Blise failed to respond within the twenty days mandated by SCR 22.03(2). Blise also failed to respond to subsequent letters directing him to provide a written response. As a result, OLR filed a motion pursuant to SCR 22.03(4) for suspension of Blise's license for willful failure to cooperate with an OLR investigation. The court suspended Blise's license, effective October 30, 2001. Blise then cooperated fully with the investigation and his license was reinstated, effective November 20, 2001.

By failing to pursue T.S.'s Worker's Compensation claim upon his release from prison, Blise failed to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client in violation of SCR 20:1.3.

By failing to respond to T.S.'s requests for information regarding the status of his claim upon his release from prison, Blise failed to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter in violation of SCR 20:1.4(a).

By failing to respond within twenty days to OLR's request for a written response to T.S.'s grievance, Blise violated SCR 22.03(2).

GRIEVANCE TWO

A woman, C.W., retained Blise in January of 2001 to represent her on numerous ordinance violations including operating a vehicle while intoxicated. The client's mother, L.Z., paid the \$2000 flat fee.

On January 11, 2001, C.W. entered not guilty pleas on all charges. Soon after that, the Delevan Town Attorney sent Blise a proposal for the resolution of the cases. Blise admitted that he did not communicate the offer to his client. A hearing was held on March 15, 2001. Blise did not attend that hearing, nor did C.W., as she was unaware of the hearing date. As a result, a default judgment was entered against C.W.

Upon receiving notice of the default judgment, L.Z. attempted to contact Blise numerous times but he failed to return her calls. Blise admitted that he never spoke with C.W. or L.Z. after the January 11, 2001 plea hearing. He further admitted that he was aware that L.Z. had tried to contact him following the entry of the default judgment and that he had not returned her phone calls.

In July of 2001, OLR requested that Blise provide a written response to L.Z.'s grievance. Blise failed to respond within the twenty days mandated by SCR 22.03(2). Blise also failed to respond to subsequent letters directing him to provide a written response. As a result, OLR filed a motion pursuant to SCR 22.03(4) for suspension of Blise's license for willful failure to cooperate with an OLR investigation. The court suspended Blise's license, effective October 30, 2001. Blise then cooperated fully with the investigation and made a full refund to L.Z. His license was reinstated, effective November 20, 2001.

By failing to inform his client of the settlement offer he had received, Blise violated SCR 20:1.2 (a), which requires a lawyer to inform the client of all offers of settlement.

By failing to attend the March 15, 2001 hearing, which resulted in a default judgment being entered against his client, Blise failed to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client, in violation of SCR 20:1.3.

By failing to respond to L.Z.'s phone calls following the entry of the default judgment, or to otherwise provide his client information about her case, Blise violated SCR 20:1.4(a), which requires a lawyer respond to reasonable requests for information and to keep a client reasonably informed as to the status of a matter.

By failing to respond within twenty days to OLR's request for a written response to L.Z.'s grievance, Blise violated SCR 22.03(2).

GRIEVANCE THREE

A husband and wife retained Blise in May of 1997 to represent them in a personal injury case arising from a car accident. Blise eventually settled the wife's case, but then failed to prosecute the husband's. Blise filed suit on behalf of the husband in January of 2000, after receiving a letter from the clients wherein they stated that they'd been trying to contact him for four months with no success. They also reminded Blise that the statute of limitation on the husband's case was set to expire on January 31, 2000.

On October 2, 2000, the husband's case was dismissed, apparently because Blise failed to appear for a scheduled motion hearing. On October 9, 2000, the husband and wife again wrote to Blise stating that they had tried to contact him many times. They requested a copy of the complaint and an update on the status of the husband's case and inquired about whether Blise had received any offers of settlement.

The husband and wife filed a grievance on September 12, 2001, indicating that they had repeatedly tried to call Blise for the preceding six months and provided phone records

documenting their numerous attempts to contact Blise. The husband stated that he had been able to talk to Blise only once, during July of 2001.

On October 2, 2001, Blise left a message for his clients stating he was going to Milwaukee to check on the status of their case and would call them back. Hearing nothing from Blise, the husband called the Milwaukee County Courthouse and was informed his case had been dismissed with prejudice. The husband again tried to call Blise but Blise did not return his phone calls.

Blise admitted that he failed to communicate adequately with his clients regarding their cases. Blise also asserted that he did not know of the dismissal of the husband's case until a colleague told him of it.

By failing to appear for the hearing scheduled for October 2, 2000, which lead to the dismissal of his client's case, Blise failed to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client in violation of SCR 20:1.3.

By failing to communicate with his clients regarding the status of their cases and by failing to provide them with requested information, Blise failed to keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information in violation of SCR 20:1.4(a).

GRIEVANCE FOUR

A man, T.D., retained Blise in April of 2001, to explore an appeal or other post-conviction action. The client's mother, R.D., paid Blise \$7500. In November of 2001, T.D. filed a grievance indicating that he had not heard from Blise since their meeting in April 2001. Blise admitted in his November 29, 2001, response to the grievance that, although he had been researching the case, he had failed to communicate with T.D. since their initial meeting. Blise

indicated further that he was prepared to follow through with T.D.'s appeal.

In April of 2002, however, T.D. informed OLR that Blise had not responded to his letters requesting information. T.D. indicated that he had, therefore, hired new counsel who requested, but had not received, a copy of T.D.'s file from Blise. OLR informed Blise of T.D.'s continued complaint regarding Blise's lack of communication. On May 17, 2002, Blise refunded the entire amount of the retainer and sent T.D.'s file to successor counsel. Court records showed that no appeal or other post-conviction action had been taken and that the bulk of T.D.'s transcripts were not requested until June of 2002.

By failing to take appropriate action to advance his client's post-conviction matter, Blise failed to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in violation of SCR 20:1.3.

By failing to communicate with T.D. beyond their initial meeting, Blise failed to keep a client reasonably informed as to the status of a matter and failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information in violation of SCR 20: 1.4(a).

Blise had no prior discipline. During the time period in question, significant personal stressors, including the end of his 25-year marriage, impacted Blise's ability to meet his obligations. Blise expressed genuine remorse for his misconduct and readily refunded all fees, some of which were arguably earned.

In accordance with SCR 22.09(3), Attorney Glenn J. Blise is hereby publicly reprimanded.

Dated this 17th day of December, 2003.

SUPREME COURT OF WISCONSIN

/s/
Referee John S. Jude